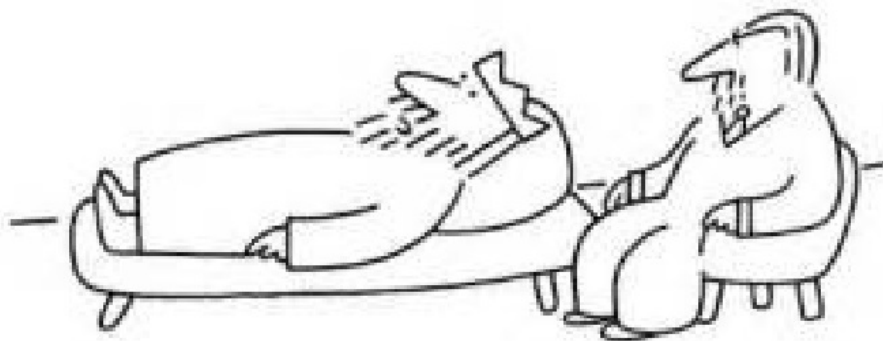


# It Is You



*"Father was a tyrant."*

*John P. Galt*

Lev Tolstoy

# **It Is You by Lev Tolstoy**

A tyrant called for a wise man to ask him, what is the best way to get revenge on the enemy.

The tyrant:

- Name me the most cruel, slow torture, by means of which I could torment the offender to death.

The wise man:

- Make him recognize his sin and leave him to his own conscience.

The tyrant:

- Oh, so there is a conscience. Listen: my cousin harshly insulted me and I can't be cheerful and peaceful again until I get the revenge. I thought about the cruelest torments and found nothing proportional to my anger.

The wise man:

- And you will not find such, because by no tortures you can destroy the crime itself, nor the one who committed it. Therefore, the only reasonable solution is: to forgive.

The tyrant:

- I know that I can't make the past disappear, but why do you say that I cannot destroy the offender?

The wise man:

- No one can do it.

The tyrant:

- What nonsense are you talking about! Look, I can now destroy him, just as I am destroying this lamp, which will never shine anymore.

The wise man:

- You've destroyed the lamp, but not the light, because the light, wherever it shines, is the same light and exists by itself in everything. You can't kill the offender, because you are the one whom you would like to kill.

The tyrant:

- You're either crazy or a prankster.

The wise man:

- I tell you the truth, you are the offender.

The tyrant:

- So, I have insulted myself, and I have to destroy myself, to atone for the insult?

The wise man:

- Not at all, no evil can be redeemed by the bloodshed. To redeem your insult, you'd have to destroy the whole humanity, because it is to blame. But even then, there would be something left that offends you, because, as you rightly said, you can't revert the past.

The tyrant:

- No matter how odd your words are, they have a grain of truth. Tell me more clearly.

The wise man:

- Look around yourself to all living things and say to himself: "This is all me". All men are brothers, i.e. all people are essentially one and the same

person. Before the highest justice, there is no evil that would not have been punished. When you lift your hand against your enemy, you beat yourself, because the offender and the offended are essentially one and the same.

The tyrant:

- I do not understand you. I rejoice at the suffering that I am causing my enemy. Is it possible for me to be the same as him?

The wise man:

- You enjoy the suffering, which you cause your enemy, and do not feel it because you're entangled by the deception of your vengeful, imaginary personal "I"; but if you wake up to your true self, you will feel all his suffering.

The tyrant:

- This seems like a crazy question. Make me feel one with the offender.

The wise man:

- It's hard to do what you wish, but I'll try. I'll bring you now in such a state in which you will feel the unity with the mankind in all people.

And the wise man, having this gift, caused in the soul of the tyrant the same emotions and feelings, as a result of which his enemy has insulted him. In this state, the tyrant recognized himself as the one whom he hated, and the rationale became clear to him, as a result of which his enemy acted the way he did. From this point of view, he couldn't find a reason to hate him, because he realized that a separate personality is not the true nature of a man, but that consciousness of the unity of mankind is the basis of all personalities, manifested in varying degrees. When the tyrant returned to his previous state, he asked the wise man the following question.

The tyrant:

- Should I tell you what I learned now?

The wise man:

- Do tell.

The tyrant:

- I saw the universal truth as though through a veil and found out that behind this veil all of humankind is one creature, and my enemies and friends are its members, just like you and I. He who offends a man, insults both us and all mankind.

The wise man:

- This is the truth I wanted to inspire in you, and which is expressed by the words: it is you.

The tyrant:

- How to live in the world after that?

The wise man:

- The servant serves, trader trades, warrior defends the state, prince rules. Each of them has his own assigned activity. But the enlightened one doesn't have anything to do with it: what for others in their circle is of high value, it would be crime and insanity to the enlightened. You have become enlightened now; you saw now the beam of light which shines for all but is perceived only by few, and you can't return back into the darkness.

The tyrant:

- Help me find the pure light. I do not want to be "I", I don't want to wish anything perishable, want to be timeless, impersonal, like you...

Shortly thereafter, the tyrant have reconciled with his enemy, came to know the destination and the purpose of the life, and went on the road leading to

eternal peace.

1906

*Notes. The dialogue between tyrant and the wise man, called "It is you", a Tolstoy narrated from German based on an article of "Theosophischer Wegweiser" magazine (No 5 Leipzig, 1903). The idea of the dialogue "It is you" - "Das bist du" – inspired Tolstoy three years ago, when he wrote the story "The Assyrian king Assarhadon", which he wrote under the influence of "Das bist du" by an unknown author, as Tolstoy wrote in his letter to Rabinovich. - B. Sreznevsky*